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Judiciary Committee Testimony on Same-Sex "Marriage"

My name is Brian Brown, Executive Director of the Family Institute of Connecticut (www.ctfamily.org), a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to encouraging and strengthening Connecticut's families, located here in Hartford. I am here today to publicly oppose both RB 1449 and RB 7395. I will focus my comments on RB 7395.

In recent elections we have seen the continuing trend of states across the country affirming the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. In the face of a Massachusetts' court decision that forced same-sex marriage on our northern neighbor without the consent of the people, citizens across this country stood up to affirm one of the basic tenants of a representative government.

Even in Massachusetts the first step to allowing a direct vote has now been taken. Just a few short months ago, the Massachusetts state legislature passed the first of two required votes to let the people vote on the definition of marriage. Just as in Massachusetts, the people of Connecticut have the right for their voice to be heard.

State constitutional amendments protecting marriage as the union of one man and one woman have passed time and again when put to a vote.

In Oregon, a state with decidedly liberal political leanings, voters passed a Marriage Protection Amendment by 57%. The case of Oregon is particularly instructive for Connecticut. Connecticut is, if anything, in a roughly analogous position to Oregon. And like Oregon, if the people had the chance, they would protect marriage.

Democrats and Republicans, suburbanites and city dwellers, African-American, Hispanic and White Americans--the majority of all these major groups in America agree that marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

In the past few years, the Family Institute has continued to receive petition signatures of Connecticut residents opposed to same-sex marriage. To date over 100,000 Connecticut residents have signed the Connecticut Defense of Marriage petition making it one of the largest petition drives in state history.

Last year a Harris Interactive poll showed that 57% of state residents oppose same-sex "marriage"; more recently a more ambiguously worded UCONN poll still found that over 55% of residents oppose same-sex "marriage."

And why do people know that marriage is the union of one man and one woman? They do so for many reasons, but one of the most important is the simple truth that children do best with both a mother and father. Same-sex marriage severs the tie between marriage and parenthood; it gives the state stamp of approval on an institution that creates permanent motherlessness and fatherlessness; it is an untested social experiment on our state's children.

Connecticut is facing an impending court decision that could itself bring same-sex marriage to our state. Why are we having a hearing on a bill that will radically redefine marriage and not on one that will allow the people a vote? What sort of message of fairness does this send to the majority of state residents that oppose same-sex "marriage"?

Ultimately, Connecticut needs a state constitutional amendment protecting marriage if the people and not the courts are to decide the future of marriage. A constitutional amendment would allow the people a direct vote on the future of marriage. But given the time requirements of passing a state constitutional amendment, a first step would be simply to allow a non-binding referendum on same-sex "marriage." Some say that the numbers opposing same-sex "marriage" are inflated, let us at least have a free and fair vote on the part of the people.

This would take marriage away from the courts and puts it squarely into the hands of the people. If same-sex "marriage" proponents truly believe that public opinion supports their position, they should welcome letting the people decide the future of marriage.

By letting each and every voter have his or her say, we can rest assured that democracy will have functioned in the way it was meant to function. You as elected officials can say, "This issue is so important we wanted to allow our constituents the chance to vote on it directly." And they will welcome that chance.

I therefore urge each and every member of this committee not only to oppose same-sex "marriage", but to support letting the people decide the future of marriage.

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